

Week 6 Address

COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

Certificate Maker in winner's circle

Does your company have employee-of-the-month, achievement or merit awards? If so, you can now create your own certificates in-house on your IBM PC or compatible personal computer by using a program called Certificate Maker. An Apple version is also available.

The program is surprisingly inexpensive — only \$39.95 — and contains formats for more than 200 types of certificates. It's available from the publisher, Springboard Software of Minneapolis, or from local computer stores.

Included are certificates of excellence, appreciation, recognition and performance improvement. You can also design licenses, congratulations and diplomas. Employers can encourage employee contributions and suggestions with specifically designed forms. And

you can create other fun, odd-ball selections such as Sweet Tooth Certificates, Best Kisser Awards and Murphy's Law Degrees.

Certificate Maker is easy to use. You just select one of the hundreds of certificate examples shown in the manual, pick a border and font style, and then fill in the appropriate name and text. Voila! Your certificate is ready to print.

Some of the certificate examples come with full headings and others have only partial titles that you can complete with your own choice of words. Others provide blank title areas. The program

also allows you to insert different names into an otherwise identical certificate so that one design can be used repeatedly. A nice, added touch is 36 colored stickers that come with the program, which can

be affixed to the final certificates to give them an "official look."

The manual is simple. The illustrations are divided into useful categories for easy reference: work, family, children, religion, academia, sports and general. Twenty-four border designs, five font styles and two font sizes also are included.

To run the program you'll need at least 256 kilobytes of memory, a color graphics card and a parallel port. In addition, you should have a dot-matrix printer with 24-pin graphics resolution to achieve the best quality.

On the downside, I was disappointed to discover:

✓ The program supports very few printers. I couldn't get it to work well on my Star NB-15, Epson LX-800 or Hewlett-Packard LaserJet. It does drive, I'm told, the H-P LaserJet Plus. While it supports some standard Epson printers and a number of other common brands, it's important to check with the

company before buying the program to see if your printer is supported.

✓ Although I love the stickers that come with the program, you can't buy replacements from the manufacturer. Once you've used them up, your future certificates will have to do without.

✓ Nearly all of the standard certificates offered by the program are on the cute side, and the choices available for serious business applications are limited.

The bottom line: Springboard Software deserves an award, with an appropriate colored sticker, for offering a package that's cheap, easy and fun. Certificate Maker is worth purchasing for both business and home use.

Hillel Segal is an independent computer consultant and author of the monthly Executive Computing Newsletter, published by the Association of Computer Users, P.O. Box 9003, Boulder 80301.



Segal